

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for analyzing a depressurization event resulting from an aperture in a vessel having a compartment having a predetermined volume, the system comprising:
 - a pressure sensor configured to sense pressure within the compartment and supply pressure signals representative thereof;
 - a temperature sensor configured to sense temperature within the compartment and supply temperature signals representative thereof; and
 - the processor coupled to receive the pressure signals and the temperature signals, the processor configured, in response thereto, to
 - determine a first derivative of pressure with respect to time; and
 - to determine a size of the aperture based at least in part on the first derivative of pressure with respect to time, the predetermined volume, the sensed compartment pressure, and the sensed compartment temperature.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein:
 - the processor is further configured to determine a feeding volume based at least in part on the first derivative of pressure with respect to time, the predetermined volume, the sensed compartment pressure, and the sensed compartment temperature; and
 - the determination of the aperture size is further based on the determined feeding volume.

3. The system of claim 2, further comprising:

memory coupled to the processor, the memory having stored therein data that relates aperture size to feeding volume and first derivatives of pressure with respect to time,

wherein the processor determines the aperture size based at least in part on the stored data.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the processor is further configured to supply information representative of the depressurization event, the system further comprising a reporter coupled to receive information signals from the processor and configured to report depressurization event information.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine a second derivative of pressure with respect to time in the compartment; and

determine a rate of growth of the aperture size based at least in part on the second derivative of pressure.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the processor is further configured to determine one or more times at which one or more predetermined pressures will be reached in the compartment.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the compartment comprises at least two selectively isolable compartments, the system further comprising:

a pressure sensor associated with each compartment, each pressure sensor configured to sense pressure within its associated compartment and supply pressure signals representative thereof;

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a temperature sensor associated with each compartment, each temperature sensor configured to sense temperature within its associated compartment and supply temperature signals representative thereof; and

wherein the processor is further configured to determine the first derivative of pressure with respect to time.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the at least two selectively isolable compartments comprises a hatch between each pairing of isolable compartments, each hatch movable between an open position, in which the compartments are in fluid communication with one another, and a closed position, in which the compartments are substantially fluidically sealed from one another, and wherein the processor is further configured to

compare the first derivatives of pressure in each compartment; and

determine whether the hatch is opened or closed position, based at least in part on the comparison.

9. The system of claim 8, further comprising:

memory coupled to the processor, the memory having stored therein volume data that relates predetermined volumes for each compartment and each fluidically communicable combination of compartments,

wherein the processor is further configured to determine an exact volume based at least in part on a feeding volume and the volume data and to correlate the exact volume to a particular fluidically communicable combination of compartments having the aperture.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the processor is further configured to compare a current combination of compartments having the aperture with a previously determined combination of compartments having the aperture to determine:

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the addition of a compartment to the combination of compartments having the aperture and the associated hatch opening; and

the deletion of a compartment from the combination of compartments having the aperture and the associated hatch closing.

11. The system of claim 8, wherein the processor is further configured to supply a hatch status signal representative of hatch position, and wherein the system further comprises a reporter coupled to receive the hatch status signal from the processor and configured to report hatch status.
12. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the processor is further configured to repeat the determination of times at which one or more predetermined pressures will be reached each time a hatch is determined to have changed state.
13. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the processor is configured with software residing in the memory.

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14. A monitor for analyzing depressurization events resulting from an aperture in a vessel having a compartment having a predetermined volume, the monitor comprising:

a processor adapted to receive one or more pressure signals representative of sensed compartment pressure and one or more temperature signals representative of sensed compartment temperature, and configured, in response thereto, to:

determine a first derivative of pressure with respect to time based at least in part on the sensed compartment pressure; and

estimate a size of a depressurization aperture based at least in part on the first derivative of pressure with respect to time, the predetermined volume, the sensed compartment pressure, and the sensed compartment temperature.

15. The monitor of claim 14, wherein:

the processor is further configured to determine a feeding volume based at least in part on the first derivative of pressure with respect to time, the predetermined volume, the sensed compartment pressure, and the sensed compartment temperature; and

the determination of the aperture size is further based on the determined feeding volume.

16. The monitor of claim 14, further comprising:

a memory coupled to the processor and configured to have stored therein:

data relating to the predetermined volume; and

data that relates aperture size to feeding volume and first derivatives of pressure with respect to time,

wherein the processor is further configured to determine the aperture size based at least in part on the stored data.

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17. The monitor of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to supply information representative of the depressurization event.
18. The monitor of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to:
 - determine a second derivative of pressure with respect to time in the compartment; and
 - determine a rate of growth of the aperture size based at least in part on the second derivative of pressure.
19. The monitor of claim 14, wherein the processor is further configured to determine one or more times at which one or more predetermined pressures will be reached in the compartment.
20. The monitor of claim 14, wherein the compartment includes at least two selectively isolable compartments having a hatch there between, each hatch movable between an open position, in which the compartments are in fluid communication with one another, and a closed position, in which the compartments are substantially fluidically sealed from one another, and wherein the processor is further configured to
 - compare the first derivatives of pressure in each compartment; and
 - determine whether the hatch is in an open or a closed position, based at least in part on the comparison.
21. The monitor of claim 20, further comprising:
 - memory coupled to the processor, the memory having stored therein volume data that relates predetermined volumes for each compartment and each fluidically communicable combination of compartments,
 - wherein the processor is further configured to determine an exact volume based at least in part on a feeding volume and the volume data and to correlate the

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exact volume to a particular fluidically communicable combination of compartments having the aperture.

22. The monitor of claim 21, wherein the processor is further configured to compare a current combination of compartments having the aperture with a previously determined combination of compartments having the aperture to determine:

the addition of a compartment to the combination of compartments having the aperture and the associated hatch opening; and

the deletion of a compartment from the combination of compartments having the aperture and the associated hatch closing.

23. The monitor of claim 20, wherein the processor is further configured to supply a hatch status signal representative of hatch position.

24. The monitor of claim 20, wherein the processor is further configured to repeat the determination of times at which one or more predetermined pressures will be reached each time a hatch is determined to have changed state.

25. The monitor of claim 16, wherein the processor is configured with software residing in the memory.

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26. A method of analyzing depressurization events resulting from an aperture in a vessel including a compartment having a predetermined volume, the method comprising the steps of:

determining pressure and temperature within the compartment;

determining a first derivative of the pressure with respect to time; and

determining whether the compartment is depressurizing based at least in part on the determined first derivative of the pressure with respect to time;

if it is determined that the compartment is depressurizing, determining a size of the aperture based at least in part on the determined first derivative of the pressure with respect to time, the determined compartment pressure, the determined compartment temperature, and the predetermined volume.

27. The method of claim 26, further comprising the steps of:

determining a feeding volume based at least in part on the first derivative of pressure with respect to time, the predetermined volume, the sensed compartment pressure, and the sensed compartment temperature; and

determining the aperture size further based on the determined feeding volume.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the compartment comprises at least two isolable compartments each having a predetermined volume, wherein each pair of isolable compartments has a hatch there between, each hatch having an open position, in which the pair of compartments are in fluidic communication with each other, and a closed position, in which the pair of compartments are substantially sealed from each other, the method further comprising the step of

determining an exact volume of a combination of fluidically communicating compartments having the aperture based at least in part on the feeding volume and the predetermined compartment volumes.

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29. The method of claim 28, further comprising the steps of:
 - determining a difference between a current exact volume having the aperture and a previously determined exact volume having the aperture;
 - determining compartments added to and deleted from the previously determined exact volume based at least in part on the predetermined compartment volumes; and
 - inferring changes in hatch positions based at least in part on the compartments added to and deleted from the previous exact volume.
30. The method of claim 27, further comprising the steps of:
 - accessing data that relates aperture size to feeding volume and to first derivatives of pressure with respect to time; and
 - further determining the aperture size based at least in part on the accessed data.
31. The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of reporting information relating to the depressurization.
32. The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of determining the rate of change of the size of the aperture.
33. The method of claim 32, wherein the step of determining the rate of change of the size of the aperture comprises the steps of:
 - determining the size of the aperture at a first time;
 - determining the size of the aperture at a second time, the first time and the second time defining an interval; and
 - differentiating the size of the aperture over the interval.

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34. The method of claim 32, wherein the step of determining the rate of change of the size of the aperture comprises determining a second derivative of pressure with respect to time.
35. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of predicting one or more times during the depressurization at which one or more predetermined pressures will be reached in the compartment, wherein the predictions are based at least in part on the size of the depressurization aperture, the rate of growth of the depressurization aperture, and the feeding volume.
36. The method of claim 35, wherein the compartment comprises an air-pressurized, human-habitable compartment containing air-cooled equipment, the step of predicting one or more times comprises predicting a time of operational significance.
37. The method of claim 36, wherein the step of predicting one or more times comprises predicting a time when non-essential personnel must be evacuated from the compartment.
38. The method of claim 36, wherein the step of predicting one or more times comprises predicting a time when air-cooled equipment must be shut down in the compartment.
39. The method of claim 36, wherein the step of predicting one or more times comprises predicting a time when pulmonary failure will occur for persons within the compartment.
40. The method of claim 36, wherein the step of predicting one or more times comprises predicting a time when the pressure within the compartment will reach approximately 2 psi.
41. The method of claim 35, wherein the step of predicting one or more times further comprises the step of reporting information regarding times.
42. The method of claim 28, further comprising the step of:

determining information relating to the location of the aperture based at least in part on a comparison of the first derivatives of pressure with respect to time in each of the plurality of compartments.

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43. A program product comprising:

(A) a depressurization analyzer executable on a computer, the analyzer including:

a depressurization detector executable on a computer to detect depressurization

and to determine a size of a gas depressurization aperture in a gas-
pressurized compartment given temperature, pressure, and volume
information relating to gas within the compartment;

a depressurization predictor executable on a computer to determine a rate of
growth of the aperture and to determine one or more critical times during
the depressurization;

a depressurization reporter executable on a computer to present information
regarding the depressurization, including the one or more critical times;

and

(B) signal bearing media bearing the depressurization analyzer.

44. The program product of claim 43, wherein the signal bearing media comprises
recordable media.

45. The program product of claim 43, wherein the signal bearing media comprises
transmission media.

46. The program product of claim 43, wherein the compartment comprises a plurality of
isolable compartments sealable with respect to each other by hatches, the depressurization
analyzer further comprising a hatch monitor executable on a computer to determine a status
of at least one hatch.

47. The program product of claim 46, wherein the hatch monitor is further executable on
a computer to determine in which compartment of the plurality of compartments the
depressurization aperture is located.

48. The program product of claim 43, wherein the depressurization predictor is further
executable on a computer to determine a time at which a predetermined pressure within the
compartment will be reached.

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49. The program product of claim 43, wherein the depressurization reporter is further executable on a computer to generate display information related to a depressurization.

50. The program product of claim 43, further comprising:

a depressurization simulation adapted to interact with the depressurization analyzer; and

signal bearing media bearing the depressurization simulation.